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A

NOCTURNAL EXPEDITION

## Round My Room,

BY

XAVIER DE MAISTRE.

*TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH*

BY

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PRIVately PRINTED, EDINBURGH.

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1886.

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*This edition is limited to 275 small-paper copies,  
and 75 large-paper copies.*



## A Nocturnal Expedition Round My Room.



I. TO arouse some interest in the new room in which I have performed a Nocturnal Expedition, I must inform the reader how it had fallen to my share. Having my attention continually called away from my work in the noisy house in which I lived, I had long thought of taking a quieter residence, when, one day, reading a biographical notice of Buffon, I found that that celebrated man had chosen in his garden, a lovely summer house, containing only his arm chair and the desk at which he wrote, while the only book admitted was the MS. on which he was engaged.

The trifles which occupy me are so essentially different from the immortal works of Buffon, that the thought of imitating him, even on this point,

would certainly not have occurred to me, had it not been for an accident. A servant, dusting the furniture, thought he saw a good deal of dust on a crayon drawing which I had just completed, and wiped it so thoroughly with a cloth that he succeeded in ridding it of all that I had so carefully put into it. After having raved against this fellow, who happened to be out, and after having said nothing to him when he came back, according to my custom, I started off at once and returned with the key of a little room which I had hired on the fifth story of a house in Providence Street. That same day, I had the materials for my favorite employments carried over, and henceforth I spent most of my time there, where domestics ceased to trouble, and picture-cleaners were at rest. Hours passed like minutes, and more than once my reveries caused me to forget the dinner hour.

Sweet Solitude! I have known the charms with which thou dost intoxicate thy lovers. Woe to him who cannot be alone for one day without feeling the weariness of *ennui*, and prefers, if need be, to hold conversation with fools, rather than with himself!

I will confess, however, that I love solitude in large cities; but, unless I am compelled by serious causes, such as "A journey round my room," I do not care to be a hermit except in the morning; in the evening, I like to see human faces again.

The inconveniences of social life, and those of solitude, thus counteract each other, and these two modes of existence thus beautify one another.

The inconstancy and fatality of earthly affairs are such, however, that the vividness of the pleasures that I enjoyed in my new residence ought to have warned me of their probably short duration. The French Revolution, which was surging on all sides, had just overtopped the Alps, and was pouring down upon Italy. The first wave carried me to Bologna. Here, nevertheless, I still kept on my hermitage, into which I had all my furniture moved, to await happier times. For some years I had been an exile : one fine morning I found myself without employment. After a whole year spent in seeing men and things I cared little for, and in wishing for things and men I could no longer see, I returned to Turin. It was necessary to take some definite step. I walked out from the *Hotel de la Bonne Femme*, where I had put up, with the intention of giving up my little room, and selling my furniture.

On re-entering my hermitage, I experienced sensations difficult to describe : Everything was in the same order, I mean the same disorder in which I had left it : The furniture piled up against the wall had been protected from the dust by the lowness of the roof ; my pens were

still standing in the dried up inkstand, and I found on the table a letter which I had begun.

"I am still at home," I said to myself, with genuine satisfaction.

Each object recalled some event in my life, and my room seemed papered with memories. Instead of returning to the inn, I resolved to spend the night in the midst of my goods and chattels. I sent for my portmanteau, and determined to start on the morrow, without taking leave or advice from anyone, casting myself without reserve into the hands of Providence.

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II. **W**HILST I was thus reflecting, glorying in this well-defined plan of travel, time was passing, and my servant did not return. He was a man whom necessity had made me take into my service a few weeks before, and as to whose faithfulness I had conceived some suspicions. No sooner did the idea occur to me that he might have carried off my portmanteau, than I ran to the inn: it was quite time. As I turned the corner of the street in which the Hotel de la Bonne Femme is situated, I saw him issue hurriedly from the gateway, following a porter who carried my portmanteau. He had himself undertaken to carry my cash box; and, instead of turning in my direction, he moved off to the left towards a point of the compass opposite to that

he ought to have sought. His intention was clear. I easily caught him up, and without saying anything to him, I walked for some time by his side without his perceiving me. Had any one wished to depict the highest degree of astonishment and fear on the human face, he would have made a perfect model, when he saw me at his side. I had plenty of time to study him, for he was so disconcerted by my unexpected apparition and the serious expression of my face as I gazed on him, that he continued the walk on for some time with me without uttering a word, as if we had been taking a walk together. At length he muttered some excuse about some business in the Rue Grand-Doire ; but I set him on the right track, and we returned home, when I dismissed him.

It was then only that I determined to make a new journey in my room, during the last night I was to spend in it, and I set about my preparations at once.

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III. I HAD long wished to revisit the country which I had formerly so delightfully travelled through, and the description of which did not appear to me to be complete. Some friends who had liked it urged me to continue, and, no doubt, I should have made up my mind to do so sooner, had I not been separated from my travelling companions. Sorrowfully, I again took up my

parable. Alas! I took it up alone. I was about to journey, unaccompanied by my dear Joanetti and my amiable Rosine. My first room itself had undergone a most disastrous revolution; nay, it no longer existed. Its walls now formed part of a horrible building blackened by flames, and all the murderous inventions of war had united to destroy it utterly.<sup>1</sup> The wall where hung the portrait of Madame de Hautcastel had been pierced by a shell. In a word, had I not performed my journey before this catastrophe, the learned men of to-day would have had no knowledge of this remarkable chamber. In a similar way, were it not for the observations of Hipparcus, they would be ignorant that there was formerly one star more in the Pleiades, which has disappeared since the days of that famous astronomer.

Already, driven by circumstances, I had forsaken my room some time previously, and transported my Penates elsewhere. No great misfortune, you will say. Yes, but how am I to replace Joanetti and Rosine? Ah! that is impossible. Joanetti had become so necessary to me that I shall never be able to replace him. Who, however, can flatter himself with the hope that he will ever be able to live with those he loves? Like those swarms of

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<sup>1</sup> De Maistre's former room was situated in the citadel of Turin, which had been taken by the Austro-Prussian army.

flies one sees hovering in the air on fine summer nights, men meet by chance, and for a moment only. Happy if, in their rapid flight, skilful as flies, they do not run their heads against one another!

I was going to bed one night. Joanetti was waiting on me with his usual attention, and appeared even extra zealous. When he took away the light I cast my eyes on him, and I saw a distinct change in his physiognomy. Was I to believe that poor Joanetti was waiting on me for the last time? I will not keep the reader in a state of uncertainty more painful than the truth. I prefer to say at once that Joanetti married that same night and left me the next day.

Let no one, however, accuse him of ingratitude for having left his master so hurriedly. I had known his intention for a long time, and I had been wrong in opposing it. A busybody came to me very early in the morning to give me this information, and I had plenty of time, before seeing Joanetti, to get in a rage and out again, so that he escaped the reproaches he expected. Before entering my room, he pretended to speak loudly to some one in the passage, to make me believe he was not afraid; and, calling to his aid all the brazen-facedness a simple soul like his was capable of, he presented himself with a determined countenance. I saw at once from his face what

was passing within him, and I was rather pleased than otherwise. Modern jokers have in our day so frightened people with the danger of marriage, that a bridegroom often resembles a man who has had a frightful fall without hurting himself, and who is at the same time full of fear and delight, which makes him look ridiculous. It was therefore not astonishing if the actions of my faithful servant were influenced by the peculiarity of his situation.

"So you are married, my dear Joanetti," said I, laughing. He had only armed himself against my anger, so that all his precautions were in vain. He fell back at once to his ordinary level, and even a little lower, for he began to shed tears. "What would you have, Sir," replied he, sobbing; "I had given my word."—"Oh! you have done quite right, my friend; may you be satisfied with your wife, and especially with yourself! May you have children like you! We must part, then!"—"Yes, Sir; we are thinking of settling at Asti."—"And when do you want to leave me?" Here Joanetti looked at his feet with an embarrassed air, and answered fully two tones lower: "My wife has found a carrier from her district who is returning empty, and leaves to-day. It would be a fine opportunity; but . . . nevertheless . . . it is as you like, Sir, . . . although such an opportunity will not be easily

found again."—"What ! so soon !" said I. A feeling of regret and of affection, mingled with a large dose of irritation, kept me silent for a moment. "No, certainly," replied I, somewhat sharply, "I will not detain you ; start at once, if it suits you." Joanetti looked pale. "Yes, go, my friend. Go to your wife. Be always as good, as honest as you have been with me." We settled some small matters ; I sadly bade him adieu : he went out.

This man had served me fifteen years. One moment separated us. I have never seen him again.

I was thinking over this sudden parting, as I walked about my room. Rosine had followed Joanetti without his perceiving it. A quarter of an hour later, a door opened ; Rosine entered. I saw Joanetti's hand as he pushed her into the room ; the door closed, and I felt a pang in my heart : he no longer enters my room ! A few minutes have been sufficient to make strangers of two old comrades of fifteen years' standing. Oh, sad, sad condition of humanity ! There is not a single stable object on which man can fix the least of his affections !

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IV. ROSINE also was living far away from me.

You will perhaps learn with some interest, my dear Mary, that at the age of 15 she was still

the most amiable of animals, and the same superior intelligence which formerly distinguished her from all her species now enabled her to bear with resignation the weight of many years. My wish would have been to have kept her ; but when the fate of our friends is at stake, ought one only to consult one's pleasure or one's interest ? It was necessary that Rosine should give up the perambulating existence she led with me, and enjoy in her latter days a rest her master no longer hoped for. Her age compelled me to have her carried about. I felt it my duty to pension her off. A beneficent nun undertook her care, and I know that in her retreat she enjoyed all the advantages which her good qualities, her age, and her reputation had so deservedly merited.

And since the nature of man is such that it would seem as if happiness were not made for him, since friend unwittingly offends friend, and lovers themselves cannot live without quarrelling ; since, in a word, from the days of Lycurgus to our own, every legislator has failed in his efforts to make men happy, I, at least, shall have the consolation of having insured the happiness of a dog.

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V. **N**OW that I have acquainted the reader with the last events in the history of Joanetti Rosine, I need only say a word of *Anima* and

*Bestia* to set myself square with him. These two individuals, especially the latter, will no longer play so interesting a part in my journey. An amiable traveller, who has followed the same itinerary as myself,<sup>1</sup> says they must be tired. Alas ! his observation is but too true. It is not that my soul has lost any of its activity, so far at any rate as I can make out, but her connection with *the other* has altered. Bestia no longer shows the same vivacity in her retorts ; she no longer has . . . How shall I express it ! . . . I was about to say the same presence of mind, as if mere matter could have any ! However that may be, and without entering into an embarrassing explanation, I will only say that, carried away by the confidence young Alexandrine had shewn me, I wrote her a somewhat tender epistle, to which I received a cool though polite reply, ending in these words : "Be assured, Sir, that I will ever look upon you with feelings of sincerest esteem." Good Heavens ! cried I, I am lost ! Since that fatal day, I resolved no longer to put forward my system of *Anima* and *Bestia*. I shall therefore, without making any distinction between these two beings, and without separating them, push them forward, *unus super alterum*, like merchants do with their merchandise, and I will

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<sup>1</sup> The author here alludes to "un second voyage autour de ma chambre," by an anonymous writer.

advance in close formation to avoid any inconvenience.<sup>1</sup>

VI. I NEED not speak of the size of my new room. It is so like my old one, that at first sight you might take it for it, had not the architect taken the precaution to incline the roof, on the side overlooking the street, to the angle required by the laws of hydraulics to enable the rain to fall off. Daylight penetrates through a single opening two and a half feet wide by four feet high, about six or seven feet above the floor, and reached by means of a short ladder.

The elevation of my window above the floor was one of those happy circumstances which may be equally due to chance or to the genius of the architect. The almost perpendicular light thrown into my cell gave it a mysterious aspect. The ancient Temple of the Pantheon receives its light in almost the same way. Besides this, no exterior object could distract my attention. Like those navigators lost on the vasty deep, who see but sky and water, I could see but the sky and my room, and the nearest exterior objects that met my eyes were the moon or the morning star; which fact placed me in immediate connection with heaven, and gave to my thoughts an elevated

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<sup>1</sup> To understand this chapter the reader should be acquainted with De Maistre's "Journey Round my Room."

tendency they would never have had, had I chosen to lodge on the first floor.

The window I am speaking of looked out over the roof, and formed the prettiest frame to the landscape. Its elevation was such that when the rays of the rising sun first lighted it, it was still dark in the street. The view was one of the finest that can be imagined. But the loveliest view becomes monotonous when too often seen ; the eye becomes accustomed to it, and it is no longer made much of. The position of my window enabled me to avoid this inconvenience, for, as I never saw the magnificent spectacle of the environs of Turin without climbing four or five steps, my enjoyment was always keen because not too often indulged in. When, weary, I wished for some agreeable recreation, I closed my day by climbing up to my window.

On the first step I saw nothing but the sky ; soon, the colossal temple of Superga<sup>1</sup> began to appear. The hill on which Turin rests, rose gradually before me, covered with woods and rich vineyards, spreading forth with pride before the setting sun its gardens and its palaces, whilst simple and modest dwellings seemed to half hide

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<sup>1</sup> A magnificent church built by Victor Amadeus I. in 1706 in accomplishment of a vow to the Virgin in the event of the French raising the siege of Turin. It is the burial place of the princes of the house of Savoy.

themselves in its valleys, offering retreats to the wise and favoring their meditations.

Charming hill ! often hast thou seen me seek thy solitary nooks, and prefer thine unfrequented paths to the brilliant promenades of the capital ; often hast thou seen me lost in thy labyrinths of verdure, listening to the morning song of the lark, my heart full of a vague unrest, and longing earnestly to spend my life in thine enchanting valleys. Hail to thee, charming hill ! thou art imprinted on my heart. May the dew of Heaven, if it be possible, render thy fields more fertile, and thy groves more shady ! May thine inhabitants enjoy their happiness in peace, and thy leafy bowers ensure perfect rest ! May thy fruitful soil ever be the sweet refuge of true philosophy, of modest science, and of the sincere and hospitable friendship that welcomed me when there !

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VII. I BEGAN my journey punctually at eight o'clock in the Evening, the weather was calm and promised a fine night. I had taken my precautions to be alone till midnight, and not to be disturbed by visitors, who are scarce at the height where I dwelt, and especially under the circumstances in which I found myself. Four hours would be quite sufficient for the execution of the enterprise, as I only intended to make a short excursion round my room. If my first

journey lasted 42 days, that was because I was unable to shorten it. I did not intend to travel in a carriage as before, feeling sure that a pedestrian sees much that is missed by him who takes post horses. I therefore resolved to travel alternately, or according to circumstances, on foot or on horseback: a new method which I have not yet made known, and whose usefulness will be soon seen. Lastly, I determined to take notes on the road, and to write down my observations as they occurred to me, so as not to forget anything.

In order to carry out my plan systematically, and to give it a further chance of success, I thought I ought to begin with a dedication, written in verse, to make it more interesting. But two difficulties occurred to me and nearly made me give up the idea, notwithstanding its apparent advantages. The first was to know to whom to address the dedication, and the second was how to make verses. After having thought it well over, I saw that reason demanded that I should write my dedication first and then consider to whom it was best suited. I set to work at once and laboured for more than an hour to find a rhyme to the first line I had written, and which I wished to preserve, as it seemed to me rather good. I then luckily remembered that I had read somewhere that Pope never composed anything interesting save after repeating many lines

aloud and moving rapidly about his study to excite his energy. I at once tried to imitate him. I took the poems of Ossian and repeated them aloud, pacing my room to arouse my enthusiasm.

I perceived that this method certainly warmed my imagination, and gave me a secret feeling of poetic capacity, which I should have made use of to compose successfully my dedication in verse, had I not unfortunately forgotten the obliquity of the roof of my room, whose acute angle prevented my forehead from going as far as my feet in the direction I had taken. I struck so hard against this confounded wall, that the roof of the house was shaken : the sparrows that slept under the eaves fled, filled with terror, and the concussion sent me fully three steps back.

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VIII. **W**HILST I was thus walking about to excite my imagination, a young and pretty woman who lodged below, astonished at the noise I was making, and thinking, perhaps, I was giving a dance in my room, despatched her husband to find out the reason of the disturbance. I was still confused with the blow I had experienced when the door opened. An elderly man, with a melancholy face, put in his head, and gave an inquisitive glance round the room. When the surprise of finding me alone allowed him to speak, he said, "My wife has a headache,

Sir. Allow me to call your attention . . . ." I interrupted him at once, and my style reflected the height my thoughts had risen to. "Respectable messenger of my lovely neighbour," said I in the language of the bards, "why do thine eyes sparkle beneath thy bushy eyebrows, like two meteors in the black forest of Cromba? Thy lovely mate is a ray of light, and I would die a thousand deaths ere I troubled her repose; but thine aspect, oh respectable messenger, thine aspect is dark as the furthermost vault of the Cavern of Camora, when the gathered storm-clouds darken the face of night, and lower over the silent plains of Morven."

The neighbour, who had apparently never read the poems of Ossian, foolishly mistook this fit of enthusiasm for a fit of lunacy, and seemed much embarrassed. Having no intention to offend him, I offered him a chair, and begged him to be seated; but I perceived that he softly withdrew, making the sign of the Cross, and murmuring: "E matto, per Baccho, è matto!"<sup>1</sup>

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IX. I LET him go out without caring to enquire how far his observation was correct, and I sat down to my desk to take note of these events

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<sup>1</sup> "He's mad, by Jove, mad."

as usual ; but hardly had I opened a drawer where I expected to find some paper, than I hastily closed it, filled with one of the most disagreeable sensations one can experience, that of humbled pride. The species of surprise with which I was filled on that occasion resembles that experienced by a thirsty traveller when, putting his lips to a limpid stream, he perceives, at the bottom, a frog looking at him. It was nothing more, however, than the springs and carcase of an artificial dove, which, following the example of Archytas, I had formerly endeavoured to make. I had worked unceasingly at its construction for more than three months. The day of trial having come, I placed it at the edge of a table, after having carefully closed the door, so as to keep my discovery a secret, and cause pleasant surprise to my friends. A thread kept the mechanism immovable. Who can imagine the palpitations of my heart, and my feeling of anxiety as I seized the scissors to cut the fateful thread? . . . . There! . . . . The spring in the dove starts and begins noisily to work. I raise my eyes to see it pass; but after one or two turns, it falls and hides itself under the table. Rosine, who was sleeping there, sadly walked away. Rosine, who never yet saw a fowl, or pigeon, or the smallest bird without attacking it and pursuing it, did not even deign to look at my dove struggling on the floor. This was the

last stab given to my pride. I went out for a walk on the ramparts.

X. **S**UCH was the fate of my artificial dove. Whilst my mechanical genius destined it to follow the eagle into the skies, fate gave it the instincts of a mole.

I was walking about sad and discouraged, as is natural after a great hope disappointed, when, raising my eyes, I perceived a flock of wild geese, passing over my head. I stopped to watch them. They advanced in triangular formation, like the English column at the battle of Fontenoy. I saw them speed from cloud to cloud. "Ah! how well they fly, murmured I; with what assurance they glide along the invisible path they are following." Shall I confess it! alas! may I be forgiven! the horrible feeling of envy once, once only, entered my heart, and I was envious of geese. I followed them with jealous eyes to the limit of the horizon. Long, motionless amidst the crowd of loungers, I watched the rapid flight of the swallows, and I was surprised at seeing them suspended in mid air, as if I had never observed this phenomenon before. A feeling of profound admiration, unknown before, filled my heart. I listened with astonishment to the buzzing of the insects, to the song of the birds, and to that mysterious and confused sound of all living creation unwittingly

celebrating its author. Inexpressible concert, wherein man alone has the sublime privilege of uttering hymns of thanksgiving ! "Who is the author of this brilliant mechanism ? Who is he who, opening his creative hand, sent out the first swallow to fly in the air ? Who is he who ordered the trees to spring from the ground and raise their branches towards the sky ? And thou, that majestically walkest under their shade, enchanting creature whose features command respect and love, who has placed thee on the surface of the earth to embellish it ? What mind designed thy divine form, and created the look and smile of innocent beauty ? And I, myself, who feel my heart beat, what is the object of my existence ? Who am I, and whence come I, I, the author of the centripetal artificial dove ?" Hardly had I pronounced this barbarous name than, recovering my senses suddenly like a sleeper o'er whom a pail of cold water has been thrown, I perceived that several persons were surrounding me and examining me, whilst my enthusiasm led me to talk aloud. I then saw lovely Georgina walking a few paces ahead of me. Half her left cheek, loaded with rouge, peeping through the curls of her golden wig, placed me once again on a level with the things of this world, from which I had made a short excursion.

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XI. **A**S soon as I had somewhat recovered from the shock which the sight of my artificial dove had caused me, the pain of the blow I had received made itself keenly felt. I put my hand to my forehead and found a new bump just where Dr. Gall has placed the bump of poetry. But I did not think of that then, and experience alone was to demonstrate to me the truth of that celebrated man's system.

After having collected my thoughts for a moment before making a last effort at my dedication, I took a pencil and set to work. Conceive my astonishment ! Lines appeared to spring from the paper ; I filled two pages in less than one hour, and I concluded from this circumstance that, if movement was necessary for Pope's head to compose verses, nothing less than a blow could get them out of mine. I will, however, not give the reader those that I then composed, for the prodigious rapidity with which the adventures of my journey followed one another, prevented my putting a finishing touch to them. Notwithstanding this reticence on my part, the accident which had happened to me must be looked upon as a precious discovery, of which poets cannot make too much use.

I am indeed so convinced of the infallibility of this new method, that, in the poem in four and

twenty cantos which I have since then composed, and which will be published with "The Prisoner of Pignerol,"<sup>1</sup> I have not thought it necessary as yet to begin the verses ; but I have neatly copied out 500 pages of notes, which form, as every one knows, the whole merit and the greater part of the bulk of most modern poems.

As I was thinking deeply over my discoveries and walking about my room, I came across my bed, on which I sat down, and my hand falling by chance on my nightcap, I made up my mind to cover my head with it and go to bed.

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XII. I HAD been in bed about a quarter of an hour and, as usual, I was not yet asleep. The saddest reflections had succeeded the thought of my dedication : my candle, drawing to an end, cast a fitful and solemn light, and my room had the appearance of a tomb. A gust of wind suddenly blew the window open, extinguished my candle, and banged the door. The dark hue of my thoughts was increased by the darkness.

All my past pleasures, all my present troubles, fell on my heart and filled it with regrets and bitterness.

Although I make continual efforts to forget my griefs and drive them from my thoughts, it some-

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<sup>1</sup> Both poem and romance are fictitious.

times happens, when not on the watch, that they suddenly re-enter my memory in a body, as if a dam had given way. There is nothing for me then but to yield to the torrent, and my thoughts then become so black, everything seems to me so dark, that I generally end by laughing at my folly; thus the violence of the evil brings with it its own remedy.

I was still in the midst of one of these melancholy fits, when a part of the gust, which had opened my window and closed my door on its passage, after taking a turn or two in my room, turned the leaves of my books, and throwing a loose sheet of my travels to the ground, finally entered my curtains and died on my cheek. I felt the sweet freshness of the night, and considering it an invitation on its part, I arose at once, and climbed my ladder to enjoy the calm of nature.

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XIII. **T**HE weather was fine: the milky way, like a slight cloud, divided the sky; a gentle ray of light fell on me from each star, and when I watched one attentively, its companions seemed to twinkle more vividly to attract my eyes, and these thoughts passed through my mind:—

It is ever for me a fresh enjoyment to contemplate the starry heavens, and I cannot reproach myself with having accomplished a single journey, or even a mere evening walk, without paying the tribute of admira-

tion I owe to the marvels of the firmament. Although I feel the full want of power of my meditations, I find in them an inexpressible pleasure. I love to imagine that it is not chance that carries to my eyes the light that emanates from these far off worlds, and each star sheds with its light a ray of hope into my heart. What ! shall these marvels have no other connection with me than that of merely shining before my eyes ? And my thought, that rises to their level, my heart, which vibrates at their aspect, shall they be strangers to them ? Ephemeral spectator of an eternal spectacle, man raises for a second his eyes to Heaven, and closes them for ever ; but, during that rapid second that is granted to him, from all the quarters of Heaven, and from the outer limits of the Universe, a consoling ray darts from each world and meets his eyes, to announce to him that some connection exists between him and infinity, and that even he is linked to eternity.

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XIV. ONE unpleasant feeling grated however on the pleasure I experienced in these meditations :—

How few people, I thought to myself, are now enjoying with me the sublime spectacle which Heaven spreads in vain before weary humanity ! It may be all very well for those who are asleep ; but what would it cost those who are walking abroad, those who are crowding out of the theatres, to look for one

moment with admiration on the brilliant constellations that shine everywhere above their heads? No; the attentive spectators of Scapin and of Jocrisse<sup>x</sup> will not deign to raise their eyes; they will brutally return to their homes, or elsewhere, without dreaming that the sky exists. How curious it is! because one can see it often, and for nothing, they will have none of it. If the heavens were always hidden from us, if the view it offers depended on a lessee, the stage boxes on the roofs of the houses would fetch fabulous prices, and the ladies of Turin would tear their eyes out to obtain my attic window. "Oh, were I but sovereign of some country!" cried I, filled with just indignation, I would have the alarm bell rung each night, and I would force my subjects of every age, of every sex, and of every condition, to look out of the window and gaze on the stars." Here Reason, who in my kingdom has only a limited right of remonstrance, was happier than usual in her objections on the subject of the inconsiderate decree I was thinking of issuing in my States. "Sire," said she, "would not your Majesty deign to make an exception in favour of rainy nights, for, in that case, the sky being cloudy, . . ." "Quite right, quite right, I had not thought of that: you may note an exception in favour of rainy nights." "Sire, I think it might be well to except also those fine nights when cold is excessive, or when the north wind blows, for the rigorous execution

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<sup>x</sup> Two comic characters in Moliere's plays.

of your decree would overwhelm your happy subjects with colds and catarrhs." I began to see a good many difficulties in the way of executing my projects ; but I did not like to change my mind. " You will have to write," said I, " to the Council of Medicine, and to the Academy of Sciences, in order to fix what degree of the Centigrade thermometer will excuse my subjects from going to the window ; but I require, I insist, that my orders shall be carried out rigorously." " And the sick, sire ?" " Of course, let them be excepted : Humanity must be first considered." " If I were not afraid of fatiguing your Majesty, I would suggest that one might (in case your Majesty thought it right, and no great inconvenience be experienced) make another exception in favour of the blind, since, being deprived of the organ of sight, . . . ." " Well, is that all ?" I inquired, with irritation. " Pardon me, Sire ; but lovers ? The kind heart of your Majesty would not constrain lovers to gaze at the stars ?" " Very well, very well," said the King, " we will put it off for the present ; we will take time to think of it. You had better give me a detailed report on the matter."

Good Heavens ! how one must reflect before issuing a mere police regulation !

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XV. **T**HE most brilliant stars have never been those which have caused me the most pleasure ; but the smallest, those which, lost in immeasurable space, appear mere imperceptible

specks, have always been my favourites. The reason is simple: You will easily understand that, causing my imagination to travel as far beyond their sphere as my eyes do to reach to them, I find myself transported without an effort to a distance such as few travellers have covered before me, and I am astonished, when reaching that point, to find myself only at the beginning of this vast Universe; for it would, I think, be ridiculous to imagine that there exists a barrier beyond which chaos begins, as if chaos were easier to comprehend than existence! Beyond the last star I picture to myself another, which itself cannot be the last. By assigning limits, however remote, to creation, the Universe appears to me but a luminous speck, compared to the immensity of emptiness which surrounds it with that fearful and gloomy chaos, in the midst of which it would be suspended like a solitary lamp. Here I covered my eyes with my two hands, to concentrate my thoughts, and give to my ideas the depth required by such a subject; and, making a supreme effort, I composed a system of the world, the most complete that has yet appeared. Here it is in all its details; it is the result of the meditations of my whole life: *I believe that space being . . . but this deserves a separate chapter;* and, considering the importance of the matter, it shall be the only one in the narrative of my journey which shall have a title.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## SYSTEM OF THE WORLD.

I BELIEVE, then, that space being infinite, creation is infinite also, and that God, during his Eternity, has created an infinitude of worlds in the immensity of space.

XVII. I WILL, however, confess in good faith that I hardly understood my own system better than all the other systems produced up to this day by the imagination of ancient and modern philosophers; but mine has the precious advantage of being contained in four lines, enormous though it be. The indulgent reader will please to observe, also, that it has been entirely composed at the top of a ladder. I should, however, have embellished it with commentaries and notes if, at the moment when I was most occupied with my subject, I had not been disturbed by certain enchanting sounds which agreeably met my ear. A voice, the most melodious I have ever heard, not even excepting that of Zeneida—one of those voices which are always in unison with the strings of my heart—sang, close to me, a

ballad of which I did not miss one word, and which shall ever remain in my memory. Listening attentively, I found that the voice issued from a window lower than mine ; unfortunately, I could not see it, the ledge of the roof, above which was my attic window, hiding it from my eyes.

The desire to catch sight of the siren who charmed me by her melody increased as the words of the ballad brought tears into my eyes. Soon, unable to resist my curiosity longer, I climbed to the top of the ladder, placed a foot on the edge of the roof, and, holding on to the framework of the window with one hand, I overhung the street, at the risk of breaking my neck.

I then saw on a balcony to my left, somewhat below me, a young woman in a white dressing-gown : her head rested on her hand, and was sufficiently bent to enable me to catch a glance, with the aid of the starlight, of a most interesting profile. Her attitude seemed purposely intended to give an aerial traveller like myself the best view of a small yet well-developed figure ; one of her naked feet, thrown slightly back, was so placed that notwithstanding the darkness I could make out its small size, whilst a pretty little slipper, apart from it, certified it still better to my curious eyes. I leave you to imagine, my dear Sophia, the awkwardness of my position. I did not dare

utter the slightest exclamation, for fear of startling my pretty neighbour, nor to make the least movement, for fear of falling into the street. A sigh, however, escaped me; but I was in time to keep back half of it; the remainder was carried away by a zephyr which happened to pass by; and I had plenty of leisure to examine the fair dreamer, sustained in my perilous position by the hope of hearing her sing again. But, alas! her ballad was done, and my evil genius led her to maintain a most obstinate silence. At length, after having waited long, I thought I might venture to speak to her: I had only to find some compliment worthy of her and of the feelings she had inspired me with. Oh! how much I regretted not having completed my dedication in verse! What an excellent opportunity I should have had of making use of it! My presence of mind did not fail me in my need. Inspired by the soft influence of the stars, and by the still more powerful wish to make an impression on this lovely woman—after having gently coughed, to warn her and to soften the sound of my voice—in the most affectionate manner I remarked: “It is very fine to night.”

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XVIII. I THINK I hear Madame de Haut-Castel,  
who never lets me off anything, asking  
me for particulars of the ballad I mentioned in the

preceding chapter. For the first time in my life, I find myself under the painful necessity of refusing her something. If I inserted these lines in my voyage, I should be undoubtedly considered the author of them, which would draw upon me, on the subject of blows on the head, many a jest I prefer avoiding. I shall therefore continue to relate my adventure with my amicable neighbour, an adventure the unexpected catastrophe of which, and the delicacy I showed therein, are well fitted to interest all classes of readers. But, before telling what her answer was, and how she received the ingenious compliment I had paid her, I must reply to certain persons who think themselves more eloquent than I was, and who will condemn me without mercy for having commenced a conversation in a manner so trivial, at any rate in their opinion. I will prove to them that, had I been witty on that important occasion, I should have openly transgressed the rules of prudence and good-taste. Any man, who enters into conversation with a woman, either with an epigram or a compliment, however flattering, discovers pretensions which should only appear when they begin to have a foundation. Besides, if he tries wit, it is clear that he seeks to shine, and, consequently, that he is thinking less of the lady than of himself. Now, ladies like to be thought of; and although they have not always the precise thoughts I have written down, they possess a delicate and natural instinct which tells them that a trivial phrase, spoken simply

to enter into conversation and approach them, is worth a thousand witticisms inspired by vanity, or even (which will appear astonishing) than a dedication in verse. Moreover I maintain (though my opinion may be considered a paradox), that light and brilliant wit in conversation is not even necessary during the longest courtship, if the heart has really called it into existence ; and, notwithstanding everything that is said by persons who have only half loved of the long intervals that separate the paroxysms of love or friendship, time is always too short when spent with one's love, and silence is as interesting as discussion.

However that may be, it is quite certain that I found nothing better to say from the edge of the roof where I was, than the words in question. I had hardly uttered them, before my soul was transported to the drum of my ears, to catch the faintest echo of the sounds I hoped to hear. The lovely creature raised her head to look at me: her long hair spread round her like a veil, and acted as a background to her charming face, wherein was reflected the mysterious light of the stars. Already her lips separated to utter sweet words . . . . . but, oh Heavens! what was my surprise and my terror ! a sinister noise resounded and a masculine and sonorous voice from the interior of the apartment, exclaimed : "What are

you doing there, Madam, at this hour? Come in!"  
I was petrified.

XIX. **S**UCH must be the sound which terrifies the guilty when the burning gates of Tartarus are suddenly opened before them; or that caused beneath the infernal vaults by the seven cataracts of the Styx, which the poets have forgotten to mention.

XX. **A** SHOOTING star crossed the sky at this moment, and disappeared almost at once. My eyes, which the brilliancy of the meteor had attracted for a moment, returned to the balcony, and saw nothing there but the little slipper. My neighbour, in her hurried flight, had forgotten to pick it up. I gazed long at this pretty cast of a foot worthy of Praxiteles with an emotion I dare not confess the extent of, but what will appear very singular, and I cannot explain it to myself, is that an overpowering attraction prevented my removing my eyes from it, in spite of every effort to direct them to some other object.

It is said that when a serpent looks at a nightingale, the unfortunate bird, the victim of an irresistible spell, is forced to approach the voracious reptile. Its rapid wings only lead it to its ruin, and every effort to get away only brings it

nearer to the enemy, which follows it with its eyes. Such was the effect on me of this slipper, without, however, my being able to say with certainty which of us two, the slipper and I, was the serpent, since, according to the laws of physic, the attraction should have been reciprocal. It is certain that this fatal influence was not a play of my imagination. I was really so strongly attracted, that I was twice on the point of letting go and of falling. Nevertheless, as the balcony I wished to reach was not exactly under my window, but a little to the side, I saw very clearly that the force of gravitation invented by Newton, combining itself with the oblique attraction of the slipper, I should have followed in my fall a diagonal line, and I should have fallen on a sentry box, which, from the height I was at, looked no bigger than an egg, so that my object would not have been attained. . . . I therefore clutched my window the more firmly, and, making a supreme effort, I managed to raise my eyes and to look at the sky.

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XXI. I SHOULD find it very difficult to explain and define correctly the kind of pleasure I felt on this occasion. All I can affirm is that it was quite unlike that which, a few moments before, the sight of the milky way and the starry sky had caused me. Yet, as in the most embarrassing situations of life I have always

tried to understand what was passing in my soul, I endeavoured now to ascertain exactly what pleasure an honest man can find in watching a lady's slipper, as compared with that caused by the contemplation of the stars. With this object I picked out in the sky the most brilliant constellation. It was, I believe, Cassiopea's Chair which was above my head, and I looked from the constellation to the slipper, and from the slipper to the constellation. I then found that these two sensations were of an entirely different character : One was in my head, whilst the other seemed to affect my heart. But what I cannot confess without some shame is that the attraction of the enchanted slipper absorbed all my faculties. The enthusiasm which, a few moments before, the sight of the stars had caused me only existed now in a feeble degree, and soon it vanished utterly when I heard the window on the balcony open, and perceived a little foot, whiter than alabaster, advancing softly to seize the little slipper. I tried to speak ; but, not having had time to prepare myself as on the first occasion, I no longer found my usual presence of mind, and I heard the window close before I had thought of anything suitable to say.

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XXII. **T**HE foregoing chapters will suffice, I hope, to answer victoriously an accusation of Madame de Hautcastel's, who has

not hesitated to attack my first Journey, under the pretext that one has no opportunity of making love in it. She could not say the same of my new journey; and, although my adventure with my amiable neighbour was not pushed very far, I affirm I found more satisfaction in it than in many others, wherein I had considered myself very fortunate, for want of some object of comparison. Every one enjoys life in his own way; but I should not think I had treated my benevolent reader well, were I to hide from him a discovery which, more than anything else, has contributed to my happiness (on condition, however, of its remaining a secret between us). It is nothing less than a new system of love-making, far more advantageous than the old one, without any of its numerous inconveniences. This invention being specially adapted for persons who may adopt my new mode of travelling, I consider I ought to devote a few chapters to their instruction.

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XXIII. I HAD observed in the course of my life that, when I was in love according to the usual plan, my sensations never equalled my hopes, and my imagination was defeated in all its projects. On thinking the matter over carefully, it struck me that if I could extend the feeling which inclined me to the love of an individual to the whole sex, I might secure new enjoyments without compromising myself

in any way. What could be said, in fact, to a man with a heart capable of loving all the amiable women of the universe? Yes, Madam, I love them all, and not only those I know or expect to meet with, but all those that exist on the surface of the earth; much more: I love every woman that has ever existed, and those that will hereafter exist, without counting a much larger number whom my imagination creates: every possible woman, in a word, is comprised in the vast circle of my affections.

By what unjust and strange caprice should I enclose a heart like mine within the narrow limits of one society? Nay, why circumscribe its flight within the limits of one kingdom or even of one republic?

Seated at the foot of an oak, beaten by the storm, a young Indian widow mingles her sighs with the roar of the unchained winds. The arms of the warrior whom she loved are suspended over her head, and the mournful sound they produce as they clash, brings back to her heart the memory of her past happiness. Meanwhile, the lightening rives the clouds, and their livid light is reflected in her fixed eyes. Whilst the stake, whereon she is to be consumed, rises from the ground, alone, without consolation, in the stupor of despair, she awaits a frightful death, which a cruel prejudice causes her to prefer to life.

What a sweet and melancholy pleasure would any tender-hearted man experience in consoling this unfortunate! Whilst seated on the grass at her side,

I seek to dissuade her from the horrible sacrifice, and mingling my sighs with hers, and my tears with her tears, I endeavour to turn her thoughts from her grief, the whole town is hastening to the house of Mrs A——, whose husband has just died from a fit of apoplexy. Resolved not to survive her misfortune, insensible to the tears and prayers of her friends, she has determined to die of hunger ; and since early this morning, when the sad news was incautiously broken to her, the unfortunate woman has only eaten one biscuit and drunk one glass of Madeira. I only offer this despairing woman the mere attention requisite not to break through the rules of my universal system, and I leave her, as I am naturally jealous, and do not wish to be compromised with a crowd of consolers, or with persons too easy to console.

Unfortunate beauty has special claims on my heart, and the tribute of sensibility I owe them does not diminish the interest I bear to beauty joyful. This gives infinite variety to my pleasures, and enables me to pass from joy to melancholy, and from sentimental repose to enthusiasm.

Often also I form love intrigues in Ancient History, and cancel entire lines in the old registers of fate. How many times have I not stopped the paricidal hand of Virginius and saved the life of his unfortunate daughter, the victim at once of excess in crime and of excess in virtue ! This event fills me with terror

when it recurs to my mind ; I am not surprised that it was the origin of a revolution.

I hope that reasonable persons and compassionate souls will thank me for having settled this matter in a friendly way ; and every man who has any knowledge of the world will agree with me that, had the Decemvir had his own way, this passionate man could not have failed to do justice to the virtue of Virginia ; relations would have interfered ; Father Virginius at last would have quieted down, and the marriage would have taken place according to all the forms required by law.

But what would have become of the unfortunate and neglected lover ? Well, what did the lover gain by the murder ? But, since you deign to have an interest in him, I will tell you, my dear Mary, that six months after the death of Virginia he was not only consoled but very happily married, and after having had several children, he lost his wife and married again, six weeks later, the widow of a tribune of the people. These circumstances, unknown till now, were discovered and deciphered in a Palimpsest MS. in the Ambrosian library by a learned Italian antiquary. They will, unfortunately, increase by a page the abominable and already too protracted history of the Roman Republic.

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XXIV. **A**FTER having saved the interesting Virginia, I modestly avoid her gratitude ; and being always desirous of rendering some service to

lovely woman, I profit by the obscurity of a rainy night and secretly open the tomb of a young vestal virgin, whom the Roman Senate has barbarously buried alive for having allowed the sacred fire of Vesta to go out—or, perhaps, for having got slightly burnt by it. Silently I tread the bye lanes of Rome, enjoying the inward delight which precedes good actions, especially when they are not without danger. I carefully avoid the Capitol for fear of awakening the geese, and, gliding through the Collina Gate, I happily reach the tomb without being perceived.

At the noise I make in raising the stone which covers her, the wretched woman lifts her dishevelled head from the damp floor of the vault. I see her by the light of the sepulchral lamp, casting around her looks distraught with terror: In her delirium, the unfortunate victim imagines herself already on the banks of the Cocytus:<sup>1</sup> “Oh Minos!” she cries, “oh inexorable judge! I loved, it is true, on earth, contrary to the severe laws of Vesta. If the gods are as barbarous as men, open, open for me the abyss of Tartarus! I loved and I love still.” ——“No, no, thou art not yet in the kingdom of the dead; come, young and unfortunate woman, re-appear on earth! revisit light and love.” Meanwhile I seized her hand already frozen with the chill of the

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<sup>1</sup> Cocytus, named of lamentation loud  
Heard on the rueful stream.  
—(MILTON'S PARADISE LOST. II.)

tomb ; I took her in my arms, and, pressing her to my heart, I tore her away from this horrible spot, filled with terror and with gratitude.

Do not think, madame, that any personal interest actuated me in this good action. The hope of obtaining the favour of the lovely ex-vestal virgin entered in no wise into my calculations : I can assure you, on the word of a traveller, that during the whole of the walk from the Collina gate to the spot now occupied by the tomb of the Scipios, notwithstanding the darkness, and the fact that her weakness obliged her to lean on my arm, I never ceased to treat her with the respect and consideration due to her misfortunes, and I scrupulously returned her to her lover who was waiting for her on the road.

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XXV. **A**NOTHER time, carried away by my reveries, I happened by chance to be present at the Rape of the Sabines : I saw, with much surprise, that the Sabines took the matter in quite a different spirit from that mentioned in history. Understanding nothing of the row that was going on, I offered my protection to a woman who was running away ; and I could not help laughing, as I accompanied her, when I heard a furious Sabine warrior exclaim, with the accent of despair : “ Ye immortal gods ! why did I not bring my wife to the feast ! ”

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XXVI. **B**ESESIDES that half of the human race to whom I bear so great an affection—shall I confess it, and will you believe me if I do?—my heart is endowed with such a capacity for tenderness, that every living thing, and even inanimate objects, have their share in it. I love the trees that give me shade, and the birds that sing in their branches, and the midnight shriek of the owl, and the sound of the torrents: I love everything . . . . I love the moon!

You smile, miss: it is easy to turn into ridicule feelings one does not share: but hearts like mine will understand me.

Yes, I get attached to everything that surrounds me. I love the paths I tread, the spring I drink of; I cannot part without regret from the stick I have taken from the hedge as I passed; I look back after it when I have thrown it away; we had made friends; I regret the falling leaves, and even the passing zephyr. Where is now that zephyr which kissed thy black tresses, Eliza, when, seated by my side on the banks of the Doire, on the eve of our eternal separation, thou didst gaze on me in sorrowful silence? Where is thy look? Where is that painful, yet cherished, moment?

Oh time! terrible divinity! it is not thy cruel scythe which terrifies me; I fear only thy hideous children, indifference and forgetfulness, which turn into a long death three quarters of our existence.

Alas : that zephyr, that look, that smile, are as far away from one as the adventures of Ariadne : in the depths of my heart there remain only regrets and vain memories ; a sad combination on which my life still floats, like a vessel, shattered by the tempest, still floats on the agitated sea ! . . . . .

XXVII. UNTIL, the water gradually penetrating through the leaking planks, the unfortunate ship disappears, engulfed in the abyss ; the waves close over it, the tempest is calmed, and the sea-gull skims the solitary and tranquil plain of the ocean.

XXVIII. I FIND I must here close the explanation of my new method of love-making, as I perceive that it is verging on the dismal. It may not, however, be out of place to add a few more details on this discovery, which does not equally suit everybody and all ages. I would not advise any one to make use of it at twenty years of age. The inventor himself did not follow the system at that period. To make the most of it, one must have felt all the sorrows of life without being discouraged, and all its enjoyments without being surfeited. It is easy to follow my system, but it is especially useful at that age when reason advises us to give up the habits of our youth, and it can be made to act as a stepping-stone or bridge from pleasure to wisdom.

This crossing, as all moralists have observed, is extremely difficult. Few men have the noble courage to cross courageously; and often, after having passed over, they weary on the further bank, and recross the river, with grey hair and to their great shame. This they will easily be able to avoid by following my new system of love-making. In fact, most of our pleasures being only the results of imagination, it becomes necessary to offer this imagination some innocent prey to draw its attention off from objects which it should renounce, in the same way as parents offer toys to children when refusing them sweets. In this way one has time to take one's stand on the land of wisdom without noticing that one has yet reached it, and one travels there by the high road of folly, which will make it peculiarly easy to many people.

I do not think, then, that I have been mistaken in the hope of being useful, which hope induced me to take up my pen; and the only thing I have to guard against is a natural feeling of pride at having revealed to men truths of this nature.

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XXIX. **A**LL these revelations, my dear Sophia, will not have caused you to forget, I hope, the awkward position in which you left me at my window. The emotion which the pretty foot of my neighbour had caused me still existed,

and I had fallen more than ever under the dangerous influence of the slipper, when an unexpected event saved me from the peril in which I stood of throwing myself from the fifth storey into the street. A bat which was flying round the house, seeing me so long motionless, took me evidently for a chimney, and suddenly darted on me and seized me by the ear. I felt on my cheek the horrible cold of its damp wings. All Turin re-echoed with the involuntary shriek I uttered. The distant sentinels gave the alarm, and I heard in the street the hurried march of a patrol.

I left the view of the balcony without much regret ; it no longer had any attraction for me. The chill of evening seemed to have seized me. I slightly shuddered ; and as I drew my dressing gown round me, I sadly noticed that the cold and the bat's attack had been sufficient to again change the direction of my thoughts. The magic slipper would have had no more influence on me than Berenice's locks, or any other constellation. I at once saw how foolish it was to spend the night exposed to the cold, instead of following the law of nature which commands sleep. My reason, which then had alone any power over me, made this as clear as a proposition in Euclid. I was, in fact, suddenly deprived of imagination and enthusiasm, and given over bodily to sad reality. Wretched existence ! One might as well be a

dead tree in a forest, or an obelisk in a public square.

What strange machines, I cried, are the head and the heart of man! Carried away alternately in opposite directions by these two motive powers, the one he follows last always seems to him the best! Oh folly of enthusiasm and sentiment! says cold reason; oh weakness and uncertainty of reason! says sentiment. Who shall decide between them?

I thought it would be a good opportunity to decide which of these two guides it would be well to follow for the remainder of my life. Should it be my head or my heart? Let us examine the question.

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XXX. SAYING these words, I noticed a dull pain in the foot which rested on the ladder step. I was, besides, very tired of the difficult position I had maintained up till then. I sat down gently; and, letting my legs hang to the right and left of the window, I continued my journey on horseback. I have always preferred this way of travelling to any other, and am passionately fond of horses. Nevertheless, out of all those I have ever seen or heard mentioned, the one I should prefer is the wooden horse spoken of in the Thousand and One Nights,<sup>1</sup> on

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<sup>1</sup> Arabian Nights' Entertainment.

which one could travel through the air, and which sped away like lightning when you turne'd a little catch between its ears.

Now, you may notice that my steed greatly resembles that of the Thousand and One Nights. Owing to his position, he who travels on horseback on his window-sill communicates on one side with the heavens, and enjoys the imposing spectacle of nature ; meteors and stars are at his disposal : on the other side, the sight of his dwelling and the objects it contains brings him back to the world. A turn of the head replaces the enchanted catch, and suffices to make in the traveller's soul a change as rapid as it is extraordinary. Inhabiting earth and heaven by turns, his mind and heart experience every enjoyment that is given to man.

I at once saw the advantage I could derive from my steed. When I felt myself comfortably in the saddle, certain of having nothing to fear from highwaymen or false steps on the part of my horse, I thought the opportunity a very favourable one to examine the problem I wished to solve touching the pre-eminence of reason or sentiment. But my first thought brought me to a standstill.

Is it for me to make myself judge in such a cause ? For in my conscience I am already for a verdict in favour of sentiment. But again, if I exclude persons whose heart outweighs their head, whom I shall

consult? A geometrician? Bah! Those fellows are sold body and soul to reason. To decide the point, a man should have received from nature an equal quantity of reason and sentiment, and, at the moment of deciding, these two faculties should be in perfect equilibrium . . . . An impossibility! It would be easier to keep a republic in equilibrium.

The only competent judge, then, would be a man who would have nothing in common with either: a man without a head and without a heart. This extraordinary result was revolting to my reason; my heart protested it had nothing to do with it. Yet it seemed to me I had reasoned logically, and I should at once have formed the worst idea of my intellectual faculties had I not reflected that, in high metaphysical speculations such as these, the greatest philosophers have often been led to frightful results which have had a great influence on human society.

I console myself, then, with the idea that my speculations will do harm to no one. I left the question undecided, and resolved, for the remainder of my days, alternately to follow my head and my heart. I fancy this is the best plan. It has not brought me a fortune as yet. Never mind, I still advance, descending the steep path of life without fear and without plans, laughing or weeping in turn, and sometimes both together, or whistling some old tune to pass the time away. Sometimes, I gather a daisy at the corner of a hedge; I pull out the petals one after another, saying:

"She loves me little, much, passionately, not at all."<sup>1</sup>  
The last petal almost invariably brings *not at all*. In  
very truth, Eliza loves me no more.

Whilst I am thus occupied, the entire generation of the living passes away : like an immense wave it will soon dash with me on to the shore of eternity ; and, as if the tempest of life was not fierce enough, as if it were urging us too gently towards the final barriers of existence, nations murder each other and forestall the date fixed by nature. Conquerors, themselves carried away by the rapid whirlwind of time, amuse themselves by slaughtering myriads of men. Hie ! gentlemen, what are you thinking about ? Wait a moment ! All these good people were on the point of dying naturally. Do you not see the wave advancing ? It already foams near the shore . . . . Wait, in the name of Heaven, one moment only, and you, and your enemies, and I, and the daisies, we shall all have come to an end. Can one understand such madness ! Come ! one thing is settled ; henceforth I myself will cease to destroy daises.

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XXXI. **A**FTER having settled by means of my luminous logic, rules for my conduct in future, I had still one point to determine with regard to the journey I was undertaking. It is

<sup>1</sup> This is a favourite amusement with children and young people abroad, and resembles our own "Sortes Virgilianæ," of counting the cherry-stones, after eating cherry-pie, repeating, "I shall be married this year, next year, now or never."

not everything to get into a carriage or on horseback ; one must also know where one is going to. I was so fatigued with my metaphysical researches that before deciding on the region of the globe to which I should give the preference I thought it best to rest and think of nothing at all. This is a way of living which I have also invented, and which has been of great use to me ; but everyone cannot make use of it; for if it is easy to give depth to one's ideas by fixing one's thoughts perseveringly on a subject, it is not so easy to stop ones ideas suddenly like the pendulum of a clock. Molière has very foolishly ridiculed a man who amused himself in making circles with stones in the water of a well ; I on the contrary should be inclined to think that man was a philosopher who had the power to suspend the action of his intelligence in order to rest, one of the most difficult operations the human mind can perform.

As this mode of existence powerfully favours the invasion of sleep, after half a minute's enjoyment I felt my head fall on my breast : I at once opened my eyes, and my ideas started afresh ; a circumstance which evidently proves that this kind of voluntary lethargy is very different from sleep, as it was sleep that woke me ; an accident which certainly never happened to any one else.

Raising my eyes, I perceived the polar star just above the house ; this seemed to me a good omen

on starting on a long journey. During the interval of rest I had enjoyed, my imagination had regained all its strength, and my heart was ready to receive the softest impressions ; so much does a temporary annihilation of thought increase its energy ! The feeling of sadness which my precarious worldly situation caused me was suddenly transformed into a powerful feeling of hope and courage ; I found myself capable of daring life, and all the chances of misfortune and happiness it brings with it.

Brilliant star ! I exclaimed in the delicious ecstasy which filled me, incomprehensible production of the Eternal Mind ! Thou who alone, motionless in the sky, hast watched since the day of creation over half the earth ! who directest the navigator over the deserts of the ocean, and a single sight of whom has often given back hope and life to the sailor pressed by the tempest ! since I have never, when a clear night has allowed me to see the heavens, failed to seek thee amongst thy companions, assist me, celestial light ! Alas ! earth abandons me : be to-day my counsellor and my guide, and tell me what region of the globe I should fly to ! During this invocation, the stars seemed to shine more brilliantly, and to rejoice in heaven, inviting me to trust to its protecting influence. I do not believe in presentiments ; but I believe in a divine providence that leads men by unknown ways.

Each instant of our existence is a new creation, an act of the All-powerfull Will. I may even assert that I have sometimes perceived the imperceptible threads by means of which Providence makes the greatest men act like marionnettes, whilst they imagine they are leading the world ; a movement of pride it breathes into their hearts is sufficient to destroy armies, and to turn a nation upside down. However that may be, I believed so firmly in the reality of the invitation I had received from the polar star, that I immediately resolved to go north ; and although I had in these far-off regions neither preference nor real object, when I left Turin the next day, I went out by the Palace gate, to the north of the town, convinced that the polar star would not abandon me.

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XXXII. I HAD reached this point of my journey, when I was obliged to get down hurriedly from my horse. I would not have mentioned this detail, were I not in conscience bound to inform the persons who may wish to adopt this mode of travelling of its little inconveniences, after having pointed out its immense advantages.

Windows, in general, not having been primitively invented for the new purpose I have put them to, architects in building them neglect to give them the commodious and rounded form of a

saddle. The intelligent reader will understand, I hope, without further explanation, the painful cause which compelled me to make a halt. I got down with some difficulty, and took a turn or two up and down my room to stretch myself, reflecting on the mixture of pain and pleasure with which life is variegated, and on the kind of fatality which makes men the slaves of the most insignificant circumstances. After which I hastened to remount my horse, furnished with a sofa cushion, which I should not have dared do a few days before, for fear of being hooted by the cavalry; but having met the preceding day, at the gates of Turin, a party of Cossacks arriving on similar cushions from the banks of the Putrid and Caspian Seas, I thought I might, without violating the laws of horsemanship, which I greatly respect, adopt the same custom.

Delivered from the disagreeable sensation that I have hinted at, I was unable to give my mind to the details of my journey.

One of the difficulties that worried me most, because it was a matter of conscience, was to know if I was acting rightly or not in giving up my country, half of which had given me up.<sup>1</sup> Such a step seemed to me too important to be settled off-hand. Reflecting on the word native

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<sup>1</sup> The author was serving in Piedmont, when Savoy, where he was born, was united to France.

land, I perceived I had no very clear idea of its meaning.

"My native land? What is my native land? Is it an assemblage of houses, of fields, of rivers? I cannot think so. Is it my family? Do my friends constitute my native land? But they have left it. Ah, I have it! It is the government. But it is changed. Good God! where, then, is my native land?" I passed my hand over my forehead in a state of inexpressible anxiety. The love of my native land is so fervent! The regrets I felt at the mere thought of leaving mine proved its existence so thoroughly that I would have remained on horseback all my life without dismounting rather than not have solved this difficulty.

I soon saw that the love of one's country depends on several circumstances—that is to say, on the long habit man gets into from his youth of being connected with the same individuals, the same locality, the same government. There only remained to examine how far these three causes contribute, separately, in making up one's native land.

The link which binds us to our fellow countrymen in general depends on the government, and is only the feeling of strength and happiness it gives us in common; for real affection is limited to the family and a small number of individuals immediately around us. Everything which breaks the habit or throws difficulty in the way of meeting men makes them enemies: A

chain of mountains, creates two peoples that dislike one another ; the inhabitants of the right bank of a river think themselves far superior to those of the left bank, and the latter ridicule their neighbours in their turn. This disposition is noticed even in large towns cut by a river, notwithstanding the bridges which span it. The difference of language divides men still more. Lastly, the family itself, in which is centred our real affection, is often dispersed throughout our country ; it continually changes its forms and numbers ; besides which, it may be removed. It is, therefore, neither amongst our countrymen nor in our family that the love of our country is confined.

Locality contributes at least as much to the love we bear our native land. A very interesting question arises on this point : it has always been noticed that mountaineers, of all people, are most attached to their country, and that nomadic nations generally inhabit large plains. What can be the cause of this difference in the affection these people have for locality ? If I mistake not, it is because amongst mountains one's native land has a physiognomy of its own, while it is not so in plains. It is a woman without features, and one cannot love her, in spite of all her good qualities. What, in fact, remains of his country for a villager to love when, inhabiting a wood-built hamlet, an enemy passes through, burning the village and cutting the trees ? The wretch seeks in vain, along the uniform line of the horizon some known object wherewith to

recall memories of the past : none exist. Each point of space offers him the same aspect and the same interest. This man is nomadic by nature unless the custom of his government holds him back ; but his home will be here, there, anywhere ; his native land is wherever the government exerts its power : he has only half a native land. The mountaineer loves the objects which meet his eyes from infancy, visible and indestructable forms: from every part of the valley, he can see and recognise his field on the side of the hill. The sound of the torrent, bubbling between the rocks, is never interrupted ; the path that leads to the village swerves round an immovable block of granite. He sees in his dreams the outlines of the mountains, which are imprinted on his heart, just as, after having long looked at the panes of a window, one still sees them on closing one's eyes : The picture graven on his memory is part of himself, and cannot be effaced. Besides, memories themselves are connected with locality, but it must contain objects, the origin of which is unknown, or whose end cannot be foreseen. Old buildings, ancient bridges, everything which bears the character of greatness and long duration, takes the place, in part, of mountains : yet the monuments of nature have more power over the heart. To give to Rome a surname worthy of herself, the proud Romans called it the *City of the Seven Hills*. A habit, once formed, can never be destroyed. A middle-aged mountaineer can have no affection for the localities of

a great city, and the inhabitant of cities cannot become a mountaineer. Hence it is, perhaps, that one of our greatest writers, who has painted with genius the deserts of America, found the Alps paltry, and Mont Blanc considerably too small.<sup>1</sup>

The share of government is evident. It is the first basis of one's native land. It is government which produces the reciprocal affection of men, and which renders more energetic the love they naturally bear to locality ; government alone can, by memories of happiness or of glory, attach them to the soil whence they sprang.

If the government is good, the love of one's native land is in full vigour ; if bad, love sickens ; if it changes, it dies. It is then a new land, and each man can adopt it or choose another.

When the whole population of Athens quitted that city on the faith of Themistocles did the Athenians abandon their country, or did they carry it with them on to their ships ?

When Coriolanus . . . . .

Good God ! into what discussion have I drifted ! I forget that I am on horseback on my window-sill.

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XXXIII. I HAD an old relation of much wit, whose conversation was extremely interesting ; but her memory, inconstant though

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<sup>1</sup> Gustave Aymard.

fertile, often made her pass from episode to episode, and from digression to digression, till she was forced to implore the help of her auditors : "What was I going to tell you?" she used to say ; and often her auditors had forgotten it also, which threw the whole company into inexpressible embarrassment. Now, you may have remarked that the same accident often happens to me in my narrative, and I confess that the plan and order of my journey are traced on the identical plan of my aunt's conversation ; but I ask assistance of no one, because I perceive that my subject comes back of its own accord at the very moment I expect it least.

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XXXIV. THOSE persons who do not approve of my treatise on the subject of native lands, must be warned that for some time past sleep has been creeping over me, notwithstanding my efforts to keep awake. Nevertheless, I am not quite sure now whether I fell fast asleep, and whether the extraordinary events I am about to relate were the effect of a dream or of a supernatural vision.

I saw a brilliant cloud descend from heaven and approach me by degrees, covering, as with a transparent veil, a young woman twenty-two or twenty-three years of age. I know not how to describe the feelings which her aspect gave birth

to. Her face, sparkling with goodness and kindness, had all the charms of youth's illusions, and was soft as the dreams of the future. Her look, her peaceful smile, all her features, in a word, realised in my eyes the ideal being sought for so long by my heart, and whom I had despaired of meeting.

While I watched her in delightful ecstasy, I saw the polar star through her black tresses, fluttering in the wind, and at the same moment I heard these consoling words. Words, do I say? It was the mysterious expression of the Divine Mind unveiling the future to my intelligence; it was a prophetic communication from the protecting star I had invoked, and the sense of which I will try to render in human words.

"Thy confidence in me shall not be betrayed," said a voice whose tone resembled the sound of Æolian harps. "Behold this is the land I have reserved for thee; this is the gem men aspire to, who think that happiness is a calculation, and ask of the earth what can only be obtained from Heaven." At these words, the meteor returned into the depths of space, and the celestial divinity was lost in the mists of the horizon; but, as she retired, she cast on me glances which filled my heart with confidence and hope.

Immediately, burning to follow her, I put spurs to my horse with all my might; but, as I

had forgotten to put on spurs, I struck my right heel against the angle of a tile so violently, that pain woke me up with a start.

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XXXV. **T**HIS accident was a real advantage for the geological portion of my journey, as it gave me the opportunity of ascertaining exactly the height of my room above the layer of alluvial soil on which the town of Turin is built.

My heart beat fast, and I had just counted three and a half beats, from the time I had spurred my horse, when I heard the fall of my slipper into the street, which, having closely calculated the time which heavy bodies take in falling, and that occupied by the transmission of sonorous undulations through the air from the street to my ear, gives a height from the level of the Turin pavement to my window of 94 feet, 3 lines, and 19-20ths of a line, supposing my heart, agitated by the dream, was beating 120 to the minute, which cannot be far from the truth. It is only for the sake of science that, after speaking of the interesting slipper of my beautiful neighbour, I venture to mention mine : I therefore warn you that this chapter is strictly intended for the learned.

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XXXVI. **T**HE brilliant vision I had experienced made me feel all the more, on awakening, the horror of the isolation in which I

found myself. I cast my eyes around and saw nothing but roofs and chimneys. Alas ! suspended up at the fifth story between heaven and earth, surrounded with an ocean of regrets, desires, and anxieties, an uncertain gleam of hope alone bound me to existence ; a fantastic support the fragility of which I have but too often experienced. Doubt re-entered my heart, still bleeding with the disappointments of life, and I firmly believed that the polar star had been laughing at me. Unjust and guilty suspicion, for which the heavenly body punished me by ten years of waiting ! Oh, if I had only foreseen then that all these promises would be accomplished, and that I should one day meet again on earth the adored being whose image I had only caught a glimpse of in the sky ! Dear Sophia, if I had known that my happiness would surpass all my hopes ! but I must not anticipate events. I return to my subject, not wishing to interrupt the methodical and severe regularity of the plan I have followed in the narrative of my journey.

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XXXVII. **T**HE clock in the tower of the Church of St Philip slowly tolled midnight. I counted each stroke, and the last drew a sigh from me. "There is another day," said I, "gone from my life;" and although the decreasing vibrations of the brazen bell still resound in my

ear, that part of my voyage preceding midnight is as far from me as the voyages of Ulysses or Jason. In this abyss of the past, seconds and centuries are equal; and has the future more reality? I am standing poised between two precipices, as it were on the edge of a sword. Time, indeed, seems to me something so inconceivable, that I am tempted to think it does not really exist, and that what is so named is only a punishment of the mind.

I was rejoicing at having found this definition for time, as incomprehensible as time itself, when another clock struck midnight, which caused me a disagreeable sensation. I am always somewhat irritable when I have been working at an insoluble problem, and I thought this second warning from a clock, to a philosopher like myself, extremely out of place. But I was simply disgusted, a few seconds later, when I heard in the distance a third clock, that of the Convent of the Capucines, on the other bank of the Po, strike midnight, as if out of spite.

When my aunt used to call her old and somewhat cross lady's maid, whom she was very fond of, she was not satisfied, in her impatience, with ringing once, but she pulled the bell-rope incessantly till her maid appeared. "Come on, Mademoiselle Branchet!" and the latter, angry at being hurried, came leisurely, and answered

sharply, before entering the drawing room : “Coming, Ma’am, coming.” Such was the feeling of irritation I felt, when I heard the indiscreet clock of the Capucines ringing out midnight for the third time. “I know it, I know it,” cried I, stretching my hands towards the clock ; “I know that it is midnight : I know it but too well.”

It is, undoubtedly, on the advice of the Evil Spirit, that men have fixed on that hour to divide their days. Shut up in their homes, they sleep or enjoy themselves, whilst it cuts one of the threads of their existence : the next day they rise joyfully, not dreaming the least in the world, that they are a day older. In vain does the prophetic sound of the clock warn them of the approach of Eternity ; in vain does it sadly remind them of each hour as it passes ; they hear nothing, or if they hear, they understand not. Oh midnight ! terrible hour ! I am not superstitious, but this hour ever inspired me with a kind of fear, and I feel that, if I ever die, it will be at midnight. Then I shall die some day ? What ! I die ! I, who speak, who feel ; can I die ? I have some difficulty in believing it : for, after all, that others should die is perfectly natural : one sees that every day : we see them pass by, and get accustomed to it ; but to die one’s self ! to die bodily ! that is rather too much. And you, gentlemen, who look upon these reflections

as rubbish, learn that every one thinks this, you amongst the number. No man thinks that he has to die. If there existed a race of immortals, this idea of death would frighten them more than it does us.

There is something in this which I do not understand. How is it that men, ever agitated with hope, or with the mirages of Future, take so little thought of the only certain and inevitable event the Future has in store for them? May it not be that beneficent Nature itself has given us this happy indifference, so that we may in peace fulfil our destiny? I believe, indeed, that one can be a very good fellow without adding, to the real evils of life, that turn of thought which leads to gloomy reflections, and without troubling one's imagination with black phantoms. Lastly, I think one should laugh, or smile at any rate, whenever an innocent opportunity offers.

Thus ends the meditation inspired by the clock of St. Philip's. I should have pushed it further if some scruples had not arisen in my mind as to the morality of my conclusions. But, unwilling to examine this doubt, I whistled the *Follies of Spain*,<sup>1</sup> which has the power of changing my thoughts when they go astray. The effect was so prompt, that I at once brought my ride to an end.

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<sup>1</sup> A favorite air at the end of the eighteenth century.

XXXVIII. **B**EFORE re-entering my room, I cast a glance over the town and darkened neighbourhood of Turin, that I was about to leave, perhaps for ever, and bid them a last farewell. Never had night appeared so lovely; never had the view before me so interested me. After having saluted the mountain and temple of Superga, I took leave of the towers, steeples, and all known objects I never thought I could regret so much, of the air, the sky, and the river whose soft ripple seemed to re-echo my adieux. Oh! if I could paint the feelings, tender and cruel, which filled my heart, and all the memories of the best half of my life, which crowded round me, like so many will-o'-the-wisps, to retain me at Turin! but, alas! memories of past happiness are the wrinkles of the soul! when we are unhappy, we must drive them from our thoughts as mocking phantoms deriding our present situation: it is a thousand times better than to give one's self up to the deceitful illusions of hope; especially is it necessary to put a good face on the matter, and to admit no one into the secret of one's misfortunes. I have noticed, in my ordinary journeys amongst men, that by dint of being unfortunate one becomes ridiculous. In those dreadful moments, nothing can be more suitable than the new method of travelling I have described. I found it so, undoubtedly. Not only did I succeed in forgetting

the past, but I was even able to look my present troubles in the face. Time will carry them away, I thought ; he carries everything away ; he forgets nothing ; and whether we try to hurry or to restrain him, our efforts are alike vain, and cannot change his changeless course. Although I seldom notice his rapid flight, some circumstance, some train of thought, recalls it to me in a striking manner. It is when men are silent, when the demon of noise is dumb in the midst of his temple, in the midst of a slumbering city, it is then that Time raises his voice, and is heard by my soul. Silence and darkness become his interpreters, and unveil to me his mysterious flight ; he is no longer a being my mind cannot comprehend : he becomes visible to my thoughts ; I see him in the skies, driving the stars towards the west. Behold him chasing the rivers to the sea, and rolling over the hills with the mists ! . . . Listen ! the winds howl under the pressure of his rapid wings, and the distant bell tolls his passing knell !

"Let us profit, let us profit by his course," I cried. "I will make good use of the seconds he will rob me of." Wishing to carry out this good resolution, I at once leant forward to urge on my steed, making with my tongue a certain noise which was never meant to hurry horses forward, but which cannot be written according to any rules

of orthography: "Gh ! gh ! gh !" and I finished my ride with a gallop.

XXXIX. I WAS raising my right foot to get off my horse, when I felt a somewhat sharp blow on my shoulder. To say I was not frightened at this event would be untrue; and here occurs an opportunity of pointing out to the reader, and of proving to him, how difficult it would be for anyone but myself to execute a similar journey. Supposing another traveller had a thousand times more means and talents for observation than I had, could he flatter himself with the prospect of such peculiar, such numerous adventures, as those which have happened to me within four hours, and which are undoubtedly the result of my destiny? If anyone doubts this, let him try to guess who struck me. In the first moment of emotion, forgetting the position I was in, I thought my horse had reared, or had struck me against a tree. Heaven knows how many terrible thoughts passed through my mind during the second it took me to turn my head to look into my room. I then saw, as usually happens in what appears most extraordinary, that the cause of my surprise was a very natural one: The same puff of wind which, at the beginning of my journey, had opened my window and closed my door as it

passed, and part of which had slipped in between the curtains of my bed, had noisily re-entered my room. It roughly opened the door and went out of the window, pushing the frame against my shoulder, which caused the surprise I have mentioned.

You will recollect that it was on the invitation of this puff of wind that I had left my bed. The shock I had just experienced was evidently an invitation to return to it, which I thought myself compelled to accept.

It is a fine thing, no doubt, to be thus in familiar intercourse with the night, the sky and the meteors, and to know how to profit by their influence. Ah! the intercourse one is compelled to have with men is far more dangerous! How many times have I not been the dupe of my confidence in these gentlemen! I had even mentioned something of this subject in a note which I have suppressed, because it happened to be rather longer than the text itself, which would have damaged the proper proportions of my journey, the shortness of which is its greatest merit.

THE END.

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*Printed by E. & G. Goldsmid, Edinburgh.*







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